

# A CRITIQUE

By

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An Examination of

*Great Commission Credentials*  
and Other EMDA Articles

# 2

## Misrepresentation of J.R. Graves

Bro Fenison's claims in *GCC* are more of a nuisance than anything else. There is nothing of substance to take hold of in this book and answering it reminds me of trying to remove cobwebs from a crawl space.

Instead of concrete statements Bro Fenison's book is full of speculation and assumption. He gives quotations from Graves which have nothing to do with the subject in hand and then from these statements makes conjectures as to what Graves believed—but without any direct support.

Nor will you find where Bro Fenison says: "J.R. Graves believed EMDA!" But what you do find is a truck load of general statements in which the author says because of this and so Graves must have believed EMDA! And why is it that it is no where in *GCC* positively stated that Graves believed EMDA? The same is true of *SCO* both editions! Could it be these men know too much about what Graves said to risk both horse and saddle? As for our part, we do not hesitate to say Graves believed Direct Authority (DA). And we do not arrive at this position by assumptions such as these brethren have used but by direct proof! Over and over again many direct quotes by Graves have been given proving his position was DA! These have been given in *LUF* and in *GPP* betimes. Our EMDA friends have never made any effort to answer these statements and for aught one would know from reading *GCC* these quotes do not exist! If they do, their ship goes down!

At first, I purposed to examine every quote of Graves in *GCC* in these articles. But as I looked over these quotes I realized that it would tax the patience of the reader because there is no substance, no evidence, and no single one of them has any thing to do with EMDA! In fact, I fully agree with every quote of Graves given by Bro Fenison in his book! But I will give samples of what I am referring to for the benefit of those who do not have *GCC*. Later I will present evidence of DA in Graves own words.

This first *GCC* quote I give is a statement about what Bro Fenison says Landmarkers in Graves' day practiced. It says not one word about the proposition to be proved—did Graves (or Landmarkers) believe EMDA? Bro Fenison says:

**Fourth**, this book is written to demonstrate that "old Landmarkism" in the days of J.R. Graves practiced regular church order and fully believed that the great commission was given solely to the churches of Jesus Christ. *GCC*. iv. (page is not marked).

Of course they practiced "regular church order!" Of course they believed the "Great Commission was given solely to the churches of Jesus Christ!" That is exactly what we

believe! Bro Fenison has stated our position nicely! We practice “regular church order”! We believe the great commission was given solely to the churches!

Again:

*"The ministers, who organized ALL the first Baptist Churches in Virginia, came either from New England, or were members of the Philadelphia Baptist Association...we must believe that they impressed the churches THEY PLANTED with their own personal convictions..."* J.R. Graves, *Old Landmarkism, What is it?*, pp. 132-133 (emphasis mine –mwf). GCC.P. 86. [Note: Bro Fenison’s quotes from *Old Landmarkism* are taken from the Bogard edition and the pagination is different from the original. *OLB=Old Landmarkism*, Bogard edition; *OLSS= Baptist Sunday School* edition. I will give both for those who wish to check the quotes in either edition. It is also interesting that every quote from Graves in *GCC* is from *OL* alone. The above quote *OLSS*. 86].

Again we are in perfect agreement with Graves. We plant churches. We impress our convictions upon the churches we organize. How could it be otherwise? What does Bro Fenison think Graves meant? Apparently something different than his words convey! Again, just what is the purpose of this quote? He could as well have quoted Graves’ position on the witch at Endor!

Again:

*"If the church alone was commissioned to preserve and to preach the gospel, then it is certain that no other organization has the right to preach it – to trench upon the divine rights of the church. A Masonic Lodge, no more than a young Men’s Christian Association...have the least right to take the gospel in hand, select and commission ministers to go forth and preach it, administer its ordinances and organize churches."* – J. R. Graves, *Old Landmarkism, What is it?* p. 36 (emphasis mine – mwf). *GCC*. Front cover. 86;118. [*OLSS*. 50].

Here is the quote which is on the front cover of *GCC* with unidentified emphasis! The author gives this quote three times in his book (on the front cover also pp. 86 and 118]. But only once ( p. 86) does he let the reader know the emphasis belongs to him. Any man who will quote Graves as believing EMDA when his own statements for DA are explicit and abundant certainly casts his credibility into Limbo! Of course there is not a word in this quote which speaks of EMDA! Not a syllable! Bro Fenison tries to insinuate Graves was setting forth EMDA here but this is a pure supposition or worse. The quote does not say that in any sense and I agree with Graves! At the end of this chapter (5) Bro Fenison admits as much about this particular reference and others contained therein.

CONCLUSION: Old Landmarkism refutes “direct authority” and demands “mother” church authority in carrying out the Great Commission. It demands the previous existence of church authority in the administration of baptism without which there can be no church constitutions. According to Old Landmarkism, constitution of Churches cannot occur apart from being linked organically to the authority of a previous existent gospel church. However, some may still say this does not prove “mother” church authority in the actual constitution service. Perhaps not, but it does demand “mother church authority” in organic linkage between a preceding church and the newly constituted church through baptism. It also demands organic church succession whereby all churches are linked together through baptism.

Thus it is easy to see that Bro Fenison is not at all convinced himself that the quotes he gave from Graves (and others) prove EMDA! As he admits he is not convinced by

these *non sequiturs* how can he ask his readers to accept them? But he goes on:

As you can plainly see, Dr. Graves believed that the vast majority of American Baptists were directly influenced by the beliefs and practices of the Philadelphia Baptist Association. In the previous chapter, we demonstrated that the Philadelphia Association was permeated by the beliefs and practices of the Welsh and English Particular Baptists. Among these Baptists, regular church order was not only their practice but their doctrinal belief. Church authority in the Great Commission was their doctrinal basis behind regular church order in the constitution of churches. [GCC. 87].

Now here is a sample of the most circuitous attempt to prove anything as I think I ever saw! Here is a string of generalities that would thrill a Jehovah's Witness and it is of the same genre as could be used to prove the world is flat! Then, as if we had not been drug through enough fallacies there is a quantum leap from *regular church order* to EMDA in the Great commission! Somehow or other, *as you can plainly see*, the choir may be fooled by this display but no one else will be!

We must ask a few questions. Did any of these groups mentioned believe EMDA? If so, why not just give the quote stating the fact? What does *regular church order* mean? Does it mean EMDA? Who said so? What evidence do we have for this assertion? Did Graves believe EMDA? If so, why not state the proposition and then supply the explicit quote to prove it? But if no such reference can be found, the next question would be, *and why not?* In the light of these facts are not these quotes from Graves an effort to *misrepresent* his views?

Another example will indicate the tendency to misrepresent Graves. Bro Fenison says:

When Graves combated the idea of "pastoral authority" or the ordained possessing "authority" as elite members in and over an existing church, he said:

*"A church is alone authorized to receive, to discipline, and to exclude her own members. This power, with all her other prerogatives, is delegated to her, and it is her bounden duty to exercise it; she can not delegate her prerogatives. . . . She can not authorize her ministers to examine and baptize members into her fellowship without her personal presence and action upon each case. A minister, therefore, has no right, because ordained, to decide who are qualified to receive baptism and to administer it. Their ordination only qualified them to administer the ordinances for a church when that church called upon them to do so."*—J.R. Graves, Old Landmarkism, pp. 37, 38. [GCC. 90; OLSS. 48].

We note the emphases do not belong to Graves [Italics and underscoring] but are added by Bro Fenison without revealing the fact. Consider also the ellipsis. What was left out? It is perfectly legitimate to leave out part of a quote if it is irrelevant to the subject. Is that the case here? Why was it left out? The missing part is:

Quod delegatur non delegatum est" is a legal maxim as old as the civil code. What is delegated can not be delegated. [OLSS. 48].

This excised sentence is actually the first sentence of a new paragraph. Now why would Bro Fenison leave out the principle sentence of the paragraph? Is it not significant? Is it not pertinent? Is this not what the paragraph is about?

It certainly is!

The reason this sentence was not permitted in *GCC* was because Bro Fenison saw it would haunt him like a repetitious nightmare! The statement: ***What is delegated can not be delegated is a pungent defense of Direct Authority and the Waterloo of EMDA!*** Graves is saying that a church can not delegate what was delegated to it!

This means all the Scriptural authority a church ever can have is *assigned* or *delegated* to it by Christ. A church never obtains any *order*, *commission* or *charge* which is not by delegation! Whatever a church has is delegated and what is not delegated it does not have! Now Graves is saying no church can delegate what is delegated to it. But if a church could delegate what was delegated to it, then this legal maxim to which Graves refers is false!

But it is not false!

Every man knows this is a true principle and he cannot help knowing the truth of it and must testify to it, if he is honest. The president of the United States cannot delegate presidential powers to any other man on earth! No congressman can delegate his powers to some other man. The sheriff cannot put the office delegated to him by the people upon another man! Christ possesses all authority in earth and in Heaven and he *delegates* to His churches what they have! Mt. 28:18-20; 18:20; 1 Pe. 2:4,5; 2 Cor. 8:5; He. 12:28; Eph. 2:18-22; 4:15-16, describe how churches receive all they have and from whom they have received them. Therefore no church, according to Graves, can delegate anything delegated to it to any other entity!

But this is the heart of EMDA!

It claims a church can delegate what was delegated to it. EMDA contends this *can* be done and that it *must* be done! EMDA says: *No delegation of delegated powers, no church!* Graves repudiates this and insists that each church must receive its power from Christ directly! This is DA explicitly stated and of course the very sound of it threatened Bro Fenison and EMDA as a dark funnel cloud! Thus something had to be done!

What this means is, that if the authority of Christ is delegated to a church, then that church **can not delegate such authority!** No church can properly delegate authority to a group to constitute a church to be, to members or otherwise! This means no church can delegate authority to start a new church! Why? Graves answered but Bro Fenison did not want the choir to read this so he censored their mail! Graves insists this is true because **the church state is delegated** and what is delegated can not be delegated! The authority of every church is delegated— hence they cannot delegate or give it to another! Either Graves and this legal maxim are wrong or Bro Fenison is!

Bro Fenison saw the handwriting on the wall and it did to him what it did to the king! He was trying to establish EMDA by quoting Graves but Graves expressed a truth that marked EMDA as the false doctrine it is and demonstrated it is contrary to

Landmarkism and the Bible, on the one hand, and established the truth of DA on the other. It was then and there that Bro Fenison forced himself to take out the pen knife of Jehudi and cut this sentence out of the quote lest the choir should become uneasy!

There is nothing in the part of Graves' quote, which was given, to which I object in the least. Why was this quote given? Probably it was given because it was essential to throw a few hush puppies to stop the yelping of the choir.

This sentence left out perfectly lines up and fits with our position just as a precision part fits the machine for which it was made! Whenever someone does not use *all the parts* you can be sure he has made a major mistake! At least one part did not fit the EMDA machine and Bro Fenison left it out.

So far all I have been doing is showing Bro Fenison does not give a single statement from Graves which spells out EMDA. Not one! All the others are of the same cloth. In fact he has misrepresented Graves position throughout *GCC* suggesting, inferring, and implying Graves believed EMDA! There is, however, not one single quote from Graves that will sustain these assumptions.

In the next article I will turn the tables and give **explicit statements**, in context and in Graves' own words proving he believed and practiced DA demonstrating that Fenison versus Graves on this subject. If I can do this, Bro Fenison's glass sword will be shattered to slivers!